

On the Type-locality of *Pogonocichla intensa* Sharpe, 1901

by G. R. Cunningham-van Someren

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While working on a collection of Turdinae from Kenya, I was sent, through the kindness of I. C. J. Galbraith of the British Museum (Natural History), a specimen of *Merula johnstoni* (= *Turdus abyssinicus*) collected by W. G. Doggett, and through the additional kindness of C. W. Benson, the holotype of the White-starred Forest Robin *Pogonocichla intensa*. Both specimens were from Sir Harry Johnston's collection and carry data written in Doggett's hand, both being dated 22 April 1900 and the locality as "Entebbe". The thrush has field number 106 and the forest robin number 100. The British Museum has added to each a printed label with the inscription "N'tebi, Uganda, Equatorial Africa. Presented by Sir Harry Johnston, K.C.B."

Sir Frederick Jackson (1938: 1007), in considering *Pogonocichla intensa*, said it was labelled as collected at "N'tebbi", adding "but was probably collected elsewhere, as Doggett was careless in the matter of labelling his specimens and given to jotting down localities and dates in a haphazard manner". Furthermore Jackson continues "The bird is probably an example of *P. s. keniensis* which has been stained by damp or immersion in some liquid". This staining was confirmed by Grant & Mackworth-Praed (1941: 38), who wrote "it must have been treated in some way that has darkened its general colour" citing the dry cracked appearance of its bill as "commensurate with its having been immersed in some liquid". Capt. C. R. S. Pitman had assured them it could not have been collected at Entebbe since it was a high altitude forest species. Further they agreed the specimen was "in general characters" similar to *P. stellata* from Kenya, especially Mau specimens; and "as Mau was one of the places visited by Doggett, we propose to fix this place as the type-locality of *Pogonocichla intensa* Sharpe. *P. intensa* thus becomes a synonym of *P. stellata guttifer*".

Mr. C. W. Benson has, at my request, kindly checked the Register in the BMNH and found that there was a second thrush and a specimen of *Drepanorhynchus* (= *Nectarinia*) *reichenowi* also collected by Doggett at "Entebbe", the former on 22 April and the latter on 7 April 1900. Doggett is known to have collected also around Lake Naivasha (Naiposha in the Masai tongue); Sir Harry Johnston (1902) wrote that "Doggett collected a special endemic fish" there, namely *Haplochromis antinorii*. Confusion as to the whereabouts of the locality "Entebbe" stems also from the fact that the specimens were labelled as from Uganda. It should, however, be borne in mind that in 1900, when they were collected, the Uganda Protectorate extended east to the region around Lake Naivasha. The species labelled "Entebbe" are in fact not known to occur at Entebbe, Uganda.

If Doggett had collected on the northwest side of Lake Naivasha, now in the Republic of Kenya, then he might well have done so in the forest areas near the lake at "N'dabibi", and so it is possible that when he asked a tribesman he mistook the name of the locality and "jotted" down "Entebbe". N'dabibi, in English means "the place of the clover" (*Trifolium*), which is fitting, as clover is widespread in the highlands above the lake, around what are to-day known as the N'dabibi and Eburru (Epuru) Forests. It is to be

admitted, however, that the altitudes given on Doggett's labels bear little relation to the actual altitude of the zone, from the lake at 6180 ft to the forest areas of N'dabibi rising to 7000-8000 ft. Doggett puts the forest robin at 2700, the thrust at 3800 and the sunbird at 3000 ft—probably merely estimates as opposed to measurements.

White (1962: 139), who placed *intensa* as a subspecies of *P. stellata*, agreed with Grant & Mackworth-Praed (*op. cit.*) that the type-locality was probably Mau, and indeed the N'dabibi-Eburru area is really the southern end section of the Mau Range, which forms part of the west wall of the Rift Valley. All 3 species inhabit these forests and even the lake shore gardens, which themselves are above 6000 ft.

However an unsatisfactory situation arises in that the holotype of *intensa* is evidently a stained specimen and does not resemble specimens from the Mau area: the yellow of the ventral surface of the holotype has a rufous or brownish stain more comparable to the rich colour of *P. s. ruwenzorii*, the darkest form of *P. stellata*, while birds from the Mau are certainly not *P. s. guttifer* of Kilimanjaro, as suggested by Grant & Mackworth-Praed (*op. cit.*).

The only thorough survey in the last 30 years of geographical variation in *Pogonocichla* is by Moreau (1951). He ignored *intensa*, making no reference to Grant & Mackworth-Praed (*op. cit.*) and designated birds in the geographical area which includes Mau as *P. stellata keniensis*; but *intensa* antedates *keniensis* and should replace *keniensis* as the subspecies of *P. stellata* in that area. Under the provisions of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, (1964), it does not in fact appear that the status of the holotype of *intensa* is vitiated in any way by its stained state*. I would, therefore, on the evidence given, designate the type-locality of *Pogonocichla stellata intensa* as N'dabibi, at the south end of the Mau Range, west of the Rift Valley with co-ordinates 0°44'S, 36°16 E, northwest of Lake Naivasha, Kenya, at an altitude of 6180-8000 ft.

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**P. s. intensa* is the name used by Britton, P. L. (Ed.), 1980. *Birds of East Africa* (p. 143), Nairobi: EANHS.